

that governments should be looking at? Absolutely. Are governments being held accountable for these things? All across the board.

Boyd: When you come up with a ranking like this, there's a power in boiling it all down to that one number. Talk to me about your philosophy of doing that versus disaggregating what you have done and going deeper on the specific issues.

Esty: What we found is that there is enormous power in presenting a single, overarching score and a ranking related to that. This is what attracts top-tier government officials, presidents, ministers, and the media. Everyone loves rankings, and everyone wants to know who is up and who is down. From a policy point of view, however, that's just a hook to draw people into a dialogue.

What we are really excited about—and where I think we are succeeding—is what comes after people look at that top-line number, when they get a chance to drill down to the underlying rankings that relate to the core policy categories and even below that, to the issue-by-issue analyses that are the foundation of the index. The rankings lure people into a policy dialogue that can surface best practices that put some nations nearer the top of the ladder.

Boyd: Tell me your thoughts on how this work relates to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, issued in 2005.

Esty: The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the EPI share a common vision of a more data-driven approach to environmental decisionmaking, where we really look at on-the-ground facts and results so that policy priorities can be based on good information and good science. What differentiates the EPI and gives it particular traction is that it is aligned not on an ecosystem basis, like the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, but rather on a national basis. National-state boundaries are the true lines of accountability.

In our index, where countries rank low, there's no ducking, there's no hiding. The political officials find they are called upon to answer for poor performance, and we think that's a very powerful tool. No one wants to be at the bottom of the rankings: every country would like to be higher up. We made particular efforts to group countries with regard to appropriate peers so that they are not ranking themselves against the top of the spectrum, per se, but against others that are similarly situated.

Take Haiti, for example, which ranks really quite low on our scale, at 114 out of the 133 countries we ranked. It's not Haiti's job to figure out why it is not number 2, like Sweden, or number 3, like Finland. But it is interesting, if you are Haiti, to figure out why you are doing so much worse than the Dominican Republic, at number 54. These are two countries that share an island, that have a lot in common. And obviously, something is going seriously wrong in Haiti with regard to natural resource management and pollution control. But for a poor country, the Dominican Republic is doing quite well. So we think there is some learning there for Haiti, and perhaps for the Dominican Republic as well, because across 16 issues, there are probably some things that Haiti is doing better.

Boyd: Inherently this is a global data exercise. Comment on the increasing availability of spatial data on environmental conditions, but also about where a government, particularly the U.S. government, stands on its ability to produce and present information that people like you would find useful.

Esty: We are moving into an era of information-age environmental protection, which is exciting. There is a great deal of data that weren't out there before, which gives us a much better handle on problems, the chance

to track trends, and a better basis for evaluating policies and understanding what's working and what's not. Having said that, I think the U.S. government still underinvests in producing relevant data.

Boyd: In that regard, how close a connection is there between the top five countries in the ranking and the quality of the data you are getting about those countries? Or is there no correspondence?

Esty: Much better data sets are available for the top 30 countries—basically the ones that are part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Paris-based, “developed country” think tank. Beyond that, the data become very thin, and frankly, after about 130 countries, it becomes so thin that we can't include all the countries that we would like. So if this move toward a more data-driven approach to environmental protection is to gain further traction, we are going to have to collect data on many more countries. We are also going to have to go after some issues that aren't tracked at all, not even in the most developed countries. These include exposure to toxic chemicals, waste management practices, releases of SO<sub>2</sub> and acid rain, recycling rates, lead and mercury exposure, and wetlands loss.

Boyd: In principle, a country could do poorly because it is using its resources to produce commodities, like cutting trees for lumber. How do you handle the fact that some of those crops and therefore the benefits of that land use are exported? In effect, you are measuring the negative consequences in one country but countries elsewhere are benefiting from that degradation. Is there any way to factor that into your index?

Esty: We took a hard look at this question in the context of exporting dirty businesses and whether countries benefit because someone else is willing to take up the challenge of producing things like steel or aluminum. And it turned out to be very difficult to get at that and hard to do consistently with our model, which centers on the government's responsibility for what it can achieve within its borders. For example, the United States imports steel from Korea but the numbers don't exist to allow us to shift some of the public health and environmental burdens that Korea faces back to this country. It's a weakness of the structure and means that in some respects we haven't captured the full picture.

Boyd: When you unveiled the index at the World Economic Forum in Davos, what indications did you get that the environment is present in the minds of these world leaders?

Esty: It's a very exciting place to release a study because you have lots of people producing reports, businesses releasing statements, major world leaders talking about critical questions, and business leaders like Bill Gates speculating on the future of the information world. So the competition for air space is tough. In that regard, we were very pleased, first by the good turnout for the release in Davos itself, and then, by the stories around the world in the weeks that followed that came from more than 100 countries and appeared in more than 500 newspapers. To date, there have more than half a million downloads of the report from our website.

Speaking more broadly, business leaders overseas take environmental protection very, very seriously, incorporating it into their operating strategies—it's one of their top concerns, falling behind only globalization and competitive strength. A dominant theme at Davos was the rise of India and China and the enormous implications this will have, both positive and negative. Obviously, it means that many, many

people will rising out of poverty, and hundreds of millions, if not billions of new consumers will be driving the economy of the world. But it also means vast consumption of natural resources and potentially significant rats of pollution, locally and at a global scale, threatening to exacerbate problems like climate change.

HONORING ROY L. WHITE

HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 7, 2006

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in recognition of Roy L. White of Shelby County, Tennessee for a lifetime of achievement.

As the founder and chief executive officer of Third Party Solutions, LLC, of Memphis, Roy has been a business pioneer.

The devoted husband of Martha Walton White, father of 6 and grandfather of 12, Roy has dedicated countless hours to the charities, civic organizations and educational institutions that help make our community a better place.

We are grateful for his dedication to helping others. He truly has given back more than he has taken, and I'm not alone in recognizing his contributions. Union University has awarded Roy an Honorary Doctor of Philosophy Degree. It's clear his work is having an impact.

A dedicated and active member of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Roy is setting an example for us all and I want to thank him for that.

Please join me in honoring the life of a beloved Tennessean on his birthday.

IN MEMORY OF VERA JEAN STURNS

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 7, 2006

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give tribute to Mrs. Vera Jean Sturns in the 26th Congressional District of Texas, for her life-long contributions to her community and to her fellow citizens. Mrs. Sturns died on June 4, 2006 at the age of 67.

I would like to recognize and celebrate Vera Sturns life. Raised in rural east Texas near Henderson, Mrs. Sturns later moved to Fort Worth with her husband, the love of her life, Vernell Sturns. She attended the University of Kansas and later served as a drug and alcohol counselor with Tarrant County Mental Health and Mental Retardation.

In addition to her professional life, Vera was involved with a number of various community organizations. She was a longtime member of the Twilight Temple Elks Lodge and a member of Community Christian Church and its Christian Women's Fellowship.

Mrs. Vera Jean Sturns is survived by her sons Robert and Michael Sturns and her daughter Paula Sturns, as well as four grandchildren. I join in mourning the loss of Mrs. Sturns and extend my deepest sympathies to her friends and family. She will be deeply missed and her service to her community will always be greatly appreciated.